

Rebranding Nigeria: Role of the Nigerians

Rebranding Nigeria: Role of the Nigerians in Diaspora presented by Mr. Anthony-Claret Onwutalobi at the occasion of Nigeria Independence Day organized by People Democratic Party Finland Chapter on the 4th October 2009

The Chairman, Sir, fellow Nigerians, our friends and wives, our special guests of honor, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

A very good afternoon to everyone.

First and foremost, On behalf of the People Democratic Party Finland Chapter, I welcome you all to this august occasion. I am very delighted to see that you honor our invitation today to join us in celebrating, our country independence day – the day we became [Federal Republic of Nigeria](#). It is also the day we commemorate nationwide our freedom from the colonial masters.

It was just 49 years ago that this nation was born, Born or freed in a literary sense, yet as a young nation, we are still struggling to recover from the menace perpetuated by the marauders and to re-orientate our politicians and citizens on a part to nation building . That is why today, we have chosen this gathering as a best platform where we can discuss on serious note how to rebrand our nation.

Rebranding Nigeria simply means to redefine our concept of Nationhood and engage wholly in the process of National renewal to attain a height where National Interest must be exalted far and above personal, ethno-religious and regional interest. In other words, it connotes the renewing of our dreams, hopes and aspirations. It is total re-dedication and re-commitment to the dictates of our [National anthem](#) and our pledge and recognizing these lines we recites everyday as sacred oath of allegiance to our Country. Rebranding Nigeria is also to rekindle the fire of patriotism not as a conditional loyalty and love to a Nation, but as an unflinching and unconditional love and loyalty to same. This will become our own task where, the domestic and international image of the Nation matters to all and sundry.

Our Role as Nigerians in Diaspora: I always believe that it is the Nigerians in Diaspora that will rescue our nation. This group is what I call the *external within*. Because I believe that they have tasted both sides of aisle, and are well formed and informed to bring in their valuable experience and expertise to the Nigerians at home, the group I also called the *Internal within*. In essence, I strongly believe that our problem must be solved by us. we do not need any stranger to help us in clearing our mess. Secondly, I must note that the Nigerians in Diaspora should realize that we have a rendezvous with destiny and that, the task of reshaping our individual and collective destinies is our sole responsibility and that, we owe the next generation a duty to craft a well projected, practical and workable blueprint for Nation building or we may be, in former [US president Ronald Reagan](#)'s word: at the edge of “sentencing our children’s children into a thousand years of darkness”. Now is the right time for us Nigerians in Diaspora to overhaul his value and

believe systems by discarding the imperialist ideology of Nationhood that was transferred by the colonial masters to our unsuspecting founding fathers. Who were psyched at Pre-independence, Independence and Post-independence into believing that once the British flag was brought down and replaced by the Nigerian flag and that once the people mumbled through the hurriedly composed and learnt anthem and that once the British army marched past the newly elected black man in caricature military uniform and offered a half-baked salute. Behold, a Nation was born. They never thought that Nation building was not a destination, but a journey. Our innocent founding fathers never suspected that, the polarization of our Country along regional path by the colonialist was deliberately targeted at dismantling our pre-colonial inter-dependency on one another's commerce, distinct culture and traditions, which dates back prior to the amalgamation of the Northern and the Southern protectorates by [Fredrick John Dealtry, \(later, Lord Lugard of Abinger\)](#) in 1914. They never realized that the colonial masters made sure that at Independence, they got only Togetherness and not Unity, Confidence and not strength.

At these defining moments in our National lives, We, Nigerians in Diaspora and our youths should be very conscious of the fact that despite our seemingly National challenges, what binds us together is far greater than what drives us apart and that it is about time we left our self-created comfort zones on a desperate search for a new and formidable National identity. We should note that, although our stories might differ from one person to the other and from one region to another, but our common National destiny is shared and that it is now in our respective hands. We need to start as a matter of urgency, replace the Imperialist administrative structure inherited by our founding fathers from the colonialist which has thus far been recreated and promoted by some of us here in foreign land. Which is described as [Dichotomy](#): Imo/Anambra dichotomy, Hausa/Yoruba dichotomy, Christian/Muslim dichotomy, Military/Civilian dichotomy, Majority/Minority, Rich/Poor dichotomy, Male/Female dichotomy, Young/Old dichotomy, to mention a few. And from which ever perspective you look at Nigeria, this is what stares you at the face. This dichotomy has become a menace that characterizes our biggest National challenge and deters National growth. And by this dichotomy, none of us have been able to capture a bigger picture of Nigeria as a sovereign Nation, rather than as a mere regional formation.

We should begin to uplift our political commitments above the ancestral political jingoism. That way, we will learn to still see and accept those who do not share our political ideologies and sentiments as enemies, but as friends with different political views. We can start this process here. For example, let us start today to talk more positive things about Nigeria and about ourselves. We can condemn our system of government and our leaders for their political failures but let us not dwell in painting ourselves blacker than we are. Let us be our brother's keeper and desist from back-biting one another or talk ill of one another. This I believe will terminate the ancient political deadlock embedded along party, tribal and religious lines

It is about time that we Nigerians aligned with [John F. Kennedy's](#) statement during his inaugural address on January 20th 1961: "Ask not what your Country can do for you, ask what you can do for your Country". By so doing, we will fortify our once existing unity

and with a common sense of purpose; rediscover the virtues of hard work, patriotism, personal responsibility, optimism and faith. Let us draw a clear margin between the Nigeria we have and the Nigeria we desperately need. Let us as true patriots see through the tiniest hole, an enlarged picture of a United States of Nigeria, the picture of a glorious nation where men and women alike are not judged by tribe, religion or geographical placement, but in [Martin Luther King's](#) word: "...by the content of their characters".

At this crucial moment of National re-birth. Let the Nigerians in Diaspora be ready to contribute to the nation building. Those who have expertise in different fields must be ready to go home and help rebuild our nation. We must begin to demand transparency, question our democracy. We must bring with us the refined democracy we enjoyed here in foreign land to our people at home. Now is the time, we must be bold enough to say that no matter what, Nigeria is my country and that, every government policies affects me directly and that, if my voice must be heard, then I need to invest my input into governance. Let us bear in mind that, in spite of the fact that we have been nourished by a generation of broken promises, we can still be able to cultivate a tradition based on the simple principle that, we have stake on one another, if National Interest is still seen as a tool for a meaningful National development. Then we must not rest in our oars to fight for what we believe in.

As Nigerians in Diaspora, It is time we should see ourselves as political architects that would rather build into our National future than political archeologist that will concentrate on digging from the relics of our past political failures. More importantly, We should also see Nation building as an opportunity of a lifetime given to us to discharge our obligations to a beloved Country. Mindful of our enormous challenges as a Nation, we still have the faith that we shall get to the Promised Land someday. Let us in the face of trouble share president [Obama's](#) conviction that, "I have no doubt that in the face of impossible odds, people who love their Country can change it". Let us convince ourselves that, if at this trying time in our history, we will collectively starve our doubts of a new Nigeria to death and regroup with a renewed mind-set of rediscovering, recreating, redefining and rebranding Nigeria, then we can boldly explore a new National creed in obama's slogan: 'Yes we can'.

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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